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964 The mother of this sheikh, who was very devoted to her son, did not survive him for many years. I was present at her funeral, which was attended by a large crowd of friends and relatives. She was buried in a grave near the tomb of her saintly son.

799 158 The sheikh ʿAbdu l-Laṭīf lived in a small village in Middle Egypt, where some of his family still reside. An old man, the son of the sheikh's paternal uncle, is well known to me.[1] The sheikh ʿAbdu l-Laṭīf was, in his lifetime, looked upon as a *walī*.[2] Insanity is the usual qualification for this high standing among the Muslim saints of Egypt, persons thus afflicted being regarded as the favourites of God. The sheikh had a habit of entering the houses of the people at night, after the doors had been locked, and while the evening meal was being cooked; for locked doors formed no barriers to the egress or ingress of this holy man. On entering [264] he would immediately eat up all the food; meat, bread, and vegetables, no matter how large the quantity, would all be devoured on the spot. Any glass bottles that happened to be lying about might be included in this repast, for these he would bite up and [152] swallow without drawing any blood. There was only one thing he feared, and that was water. If anyone threw a few drops of water at him he would run away in terror, as fast as his legs could carry him. My informant remembered him well, and he told me that on one occasion the sheikh entered his house after the entrance door had been securely locked and ate up all the food, including soup prepared for the evening meal.

792 766 778 [269] When the sheikh died hundreds of people attended his funeral, and, being a very good man, he made his bearers walk quickly to the grave.[3] Above it has been erected the usual domed tomb; it is situated near that of the venerated sheikh Umbārak (Fig. 140) for whom a *mūlid*, or festival, is held once every year.[4]

769 288 One year, on the occasion of this festival, a man climbed on to the outside of the tomb of the sheikh ʿAbdu l-Laṭīf without first removing his shoes. Some of the people standing round remonstrated with him for this act of irreverence, but he replied, "Who is the sheikh ʿAbdu l-Laṭīf? He is nobody!" and refused to climb down or to take off his shoes. However, when he wanted

[1] At the moment of writing this I received a letter from Egypt telling me of this old man's death. He is the same man who divorced his wife by the triple [586] divorce, described in Chapter V, pp. 95f.

[2] *Walī* means 'friend' (*i.e.*, of God), and a Muslim saint is commonly so designated.

[3] See Chapter VII, p. 113. [4] See Chapter XVI, pp. 252 ff.

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to climb down and join the festive crowds he found that he could not move, and that, when he tried to do so, his limbs were rigid and his whole body paralysed. On seeing the plight of the wretched man cries to the sheikh were immediately raised. People came with drums and tambourines, others sang and clapped their hands in rhythmic accompaniment to the music, till at last, after about two hours of such intercession, the man regained his power of locomotion, and so was able to move away.

FIG. 140. TOMB OF THE SHEIKH UMBĀRAK
The external mural decorations are to be noted.

Some time after this exhibition of his power the sheikh ʿAbdu l-Laṭīf appeared to a man in a village a few miles distant, telling him to build him a tomb there. The people of this village went in triumph to the sheikh's native place and exultantly told the inhabitants that their sheikh had now come to them.

The original tomb still exists, but it is in a very dilapidated state, and no doubt in course of time it will wholly disappear, unless something happens to revive the veneration formerly paid to the holy man in his native village. Meanwhile, the people of the village where ʿAbdu l-Laṭīf's later resting-place is built hold a *mūlid* every year in honour of their acquired sheikh.

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he had done this he would first find a very deep well, and westward from this he would find a large quantity of bricks, enough for the building of the church; while to the east he would find piles of white lime to be used in the construction of the building. To the east again of the lime, if he dug down to the depth of half a metre, he would find a heap of money, sufficient to pay for the entire building of the church, including the wages of the workmen employed. The saint told the *farrāsh* that he was to start at once to build the church, and that if he disobeyed his orders he would be killed. Then Māri Mīna el-ʿAgayebi vanished.

E 346

The *farrāsh* set to work to dig up the plot indicated, and found everything as the saint had told him, including the well, which he discovered first.

The church still stands on this spot, but the old *farrāsh* who built it has, of course, been dead for a long time, and since his day the building has been enlarged by one of the Coptic bishops. The well is still to be seen within the precincts of the church.

E 776

Māri Mīna el-ʿAgayebi is a very popular Coptic saint, and he is venerated not only by the Christians, but also by many of the Muslims, who have, so I was told, the greatest faith in him, and who often appeal to him for aid in time of need.

E 776 346 766

Egladiūs el-ʿAzab is a saint of great repute. Several churches in Egypt are dedicated to him, and his body lies with those of four other saints in a special edifice set apart for them in a large town in Upper Egypt. The bodies of these five holy men are still in a good state of preservation, though they have all been dead for a long period of time. Each body lies in a coffin. Egladiūs el-ʿAzab was very young when he died, having been killed, so I was told, by the Arabs because he was a Christian. He wears a wide ribbon of gold across his breast, and a gold earring in one ear. A special festival is held every year in his honour, for the due celebration of which the people make large quantities of bread, and bring cattle, which are slaughtered at the churches. The bread and meat are distributed among the poor, who flock in great numbers on these occasions to all the churches dedicated to him.

E 769

E 776 [346]

In a certain village in Asyūṭ Province there is a Coptic church dedicated to Māri Egladiūs el-ʿAzab. A man who lives close to the sacred building was, on one occasion, entertaining a Muslim friend who had arrived from another province. While they were engaged in conversation together the talk turned on to the subject

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of sheikhs, and the Muslim remarked that the Copts had no real saints, but that what they believed about their so-called saints was all rubbish. To this his host replied, "That is not so; we have a celebrated saint to whom the church close by is dedicated." But his guest scoffed at him.

At night, when the Muslim was sleeping in a room in the upper story of the house—his host sleeping on the ground floor—a young man appeared before him, and touched him to wake him from his slumbers. This uninvited guest then seized the Muslim by the throat and asked him how he dared to speak of the Coptic saints in the scornful way he had done.

Meanwhile, the host, hearing his guest choking, and crying out, "Leave me, leave me! I am wrong, I am wrong!" rushed up, thinking that he was being attacked by thieves. When he arrived on the scene he found his guest weeping, so he asked him what was the matter. The Muslim then told him of his unexpected visitor, and described his appearance. From the description the host knew that the mysterious person was the great saint himself. So loud had been the cries of the terrified Muslim that the whole neighbourhood had heard him.

On the following morning the now repentant Muslim repaired to the church dedicated to Māri Egladiūs el-'Azab, and, with shoes hanging round his neck, knelt before the altar and prayed to the saint, saying, "Pardon me, pardon me, pardon me!" After this he left the church.

Since this visitation of the saint the Muslim, who still remains a follower of Islām, sends every year a gift of wax for the manufacture of candles used in the services held in the church, together with a present of incense.

It must be explained here that it is the custom all over Egypt, when a Copt or a Muslim has committed a wrong against a saint or sheikh, for him to repair to the church or mosque and borrow a pair of shoes such as are worn by the poor *fellāḥīn*. These shoes are suspended by a cord round the neck of the penitent, who must wear them in this way as he kneels before the altar, or *kibleh*,[1] as the case may be. As he kneels he must repeat the words "Pardon me," seven, five, or three times, the number of repetitions being decided by the priest or *imām* present in the church or mosque. When this act of repentance is finished the man goes out and returns

[1] The prayer-niche turned toward Mecca.